
ANNUAL REPORT

OF

B. POPE BARTLETT, Esq.


Medical Officer of Health,

MERE RURAL SANITARY AUTHORITY.



PRESENTED 1896.

Weekly Record Offices, Gillingham.



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MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT OF THE MERE DISTRICT.

At the last meeting of the Mere Guardians, the Medical Officer of Health (Dr B. Pope Bartlett) submitted the following report :—

To the Chairman and Members of the Mere Rural District Council :—

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour to lay before you my report as Medical Officer of Health, for the year ending December 31st, 1895.

DEATHS.

During the year 1895 the deaths of 123 persons of all ages and from all causes were registered, against 93 in the previous year, an increase of 30. These show a death-rate of 17·7 per 1000 population, calculated on the census estimated to the middle of the year 1895.

Of this number 18 or 14·6 per cent. (equal to 2·5 per 1000 of the population) were of children under one year of age, and 61 or 42 per cent. of persons 65 years of age and upwards. On comparing these figures with those of last year, we find there is an increase in the number of deaths of persons under five and over 25 years of age, showing that during the year 1895 there has been a higher mortality among the very young and the old.

According to the quarters of the year, the deaths were as follows :—

First quarter	...	...	...	48
Second „	...	...	...	32
Third „	...	...	...	16
Fourth „	...	...	...	27

123

There were 59 deaths of males and 64 of females.

BIRTHS.

160 births were registered during the year, a decrease of 18 on last year. This number is equal to an annual birth-rate of 23·0 per 1000 population. Excess of births over deaths 37. Of the births 84 were of males and 76 of females.

MORTALITY FROM CERTAIN DISEASES.

Of the deaths classified according to their causes, 53, or nearly half the total number, were due to diseases of the chest, viz., seven to phthisis, 21 to bronchitis, pneumonia and pleurisy, and 25 to heart disease. No doubt the severity of the weather during the first three months of the year was the cause of the high mortality in chest cases, and to the same cause may be attributed the high death rate among the very old and the very young during the early part of the year. Two deaths were caused by injuries.

DEATHS FROM ZYMOTIC AND SPECIFIC FEBRILE DISEASES.

Four deaths were attributed to these diseases, equal to about 3·2 per cent of the total number of deaths, and to ·57 per 1000 of the population. Of the four deaths two were due to influenza, and occurred in the month of March. The other two deaths were due to whooping cough, and took place in the spring.

NEW CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES UNDER TABLE B.

During the past year the district has again been remarkably free from these diseases. The total number notified under the Notification Act is only 18, as compared with 28 in the year 1894.

SCARLATINA.

At the end of October, this disease appeared in a very mild form in the parish of Maiden Bradley, and as it continued to spread among the children, I considered it advisable to close the school a few weeks earlier than is usually done for the Christmas holidays. Eight cases were notified during the months of October, November and December, but they were all of a very mild type. In this mild form of the complaint it is most difficult to keep the cases isolated, as the children are apparently well and anxious to play with others before they have finished desquamating, and the parents do not recognise the importance of taking precautions when the disease is apparently so trivial. It is a difficult question to decide how under these circumstances a Medical Officer of Health can insure the cases being properly isolated, as repeated warnings in some cases appear to have but little effect. I wish it to be generally known that a severe form of the complaint may be caught from a child who has apparently only had a very mild attack. Besides the above mentioned, there were single cases of scarlatina in the parishes of Bourton, Mere and Stourton during the year, but the infection did not spread beyond the patient affected.

DIPHTHERIA.

Only four cases of this disease have been reported, two in Mere, one in Maiden Bradley, and one in Bourton. This is the smallest number reported in any year since the Notification Act came into force, and I believe it may be considered a sign of improvement in the general sanitary state of the district.

ERYSIPELAS.

Four cases have been reported. They were sporadic in appearance, and of a mild type.

WHOOPING COUGH.

This disease was prevalent in the district during the spring of the year. It was very general, not being confined to any one part, and two children died from complications consequent on the disease.

INFLUENZA.

In the spring of the year the parish of Bourton suffered severely from this disease. It first appeared at the end of February, and its commencement was coincident with the return of some men who, employed by the foundry, had been working in London and contracted the disease there.

The contagious nature of the complaint was shown by the rapidity with which it spread through the village, the men working at the foundry being the first victims, in the course of a week a large number of them being laid up. From the men it spread to their families, and at one time there were but few houses in the village entirely free from the disease. The period of incubation was very short, at the longest but two or three days. Chest symptoms were a frequent complication of the complaint, bronchitis being very common, and pneumonia far from rare. The disease left most of those affected with a troublesome cough not amenable to ordinary treatment. As a rule in uncomplicated cases, the feverish symptoms were not so severe as in former epidemics, but the contagious nature of the disease was quite as marked, many having suffered who had escaped when the complaint was prevalent before. There is no doubt that one attack of influenza does not grant immunity from a second, as many had it this time who suffered severely from the same four years ago. Soon after its appearance in Bourton it spread to the surrounding villages, and as the spring advanced it gradually disappeared.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFICATION ACT.

For the fifth year this Act has been in force in the district, and although the cases notified have been few in number the results have been satisfactory. The medical men practising in the district have been prompt in sending me notice of outbreaks of infectious disease, and so the Sanitary Authorities have been able to take early precautions. Toward the end of the year, the Wilts County Council commenced a system of notifying to each medical officer of health in the county the outbreak of infectious disease in other parts of the county beyond his district. I am of opinion that this information will prove useful to the medical officers, as by keeping them informed of the prevalence of infectious diseases in the neighbourhood of their localities, they may be able to take precaution to prevent them gaining admission into their districts. This would be especially the case with such a disease as smallpox.

GENERAL SANITARY CONDITION OF THE DISTRICT.

During the year I have visited all parts of the district, and have found the general sanitary condition

satisfactory. Numerous sanitary defects have been reported and corrected, the majority of which were offensive privies, 42 of these have come under the notice of the Sanitary Authorities ; in many cases not only were the cesspools in a foul condition, but they were situated in such close proximity to dwellings or water supplies as to be a danger to health. In the parish of Maiden Bradley, I have noticed several of these buildings attached to the wall of the house (in some cases only a few yards from the back door) and of necessity causing an offensive smell in the living rooms. Some have been removed, but many remain to be altered. Besides the above, the following defects have been reported and abated :—

Manure heap	..	16
Offensive drains	..	4
Offensive pigstyes	..	2
Overcrowded cottages		2
Dilapidated Cottages		1

In September I visited the Mere Sewage Works, examined the tanks and irrigation land, and found all in satisfactory working order. The effluent water was efficiently purified and in a suitable condition to enter the stream.

I am pleased to notice that since the formation of the Parish Councils, in several villages in the district the members have taken an interest in the sanitary condition of these parishes, and have brought various defects, obstructed drains, &c., to the notice of the Sanitary Authorities. The members of Parish Councils, by their more intimate knowledge of the requirements of the villages, and owing to their being always among the inhabitants, can be of great service in improving the sanitary state of the district, and the Sanitary Authorities will always welcome any information with regard to sanitary defects, and take steps as soon as possible to rectify any errors brought to their notice.

Nuisances reported	..	..	77
Nuisances abated	..	..	73

WATER SUPPLY.

During the past year, the water supply has engaged the attention of at least three Parish Councils in the district. These have been in cases which I mentioned in my last two reports as being defective. The Mere Parish Council have taken steps to improve the supply of water in the Causeway at Mere and at present the matter is still under consideration, the difficulty being to procure a supply of pure water which can be easily distributed in the locality where it is required. In October the Parish Council of East Knoyle considered the question of the water supply of the village, and I understand that so far nothing has been done to remedy

the deficient supply of water in the Shaftesbury Road. From what I have observed, there are plenty of sources from which good water can be obtained in the village, and all that is required is a proper system of distribution. At West Knoyle I believe that the water supply engaged the attention of the parish meeting, but I have not heard that any special steps have been taken to distribute a good supply of water among the inhabitants. I need scarcely point out how important, as far as health is concerned, a plentiful supply of pure water easily procurable is in every village, and I trust the Parish Councils will continue to give this question due consideration.

Trusting you will consider this report for the past year satisfactory,

I am, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

B. POPE BARTLETT,

Medical Officer of Health.

The registered births in the several parishes have been as follows :—

	Census, 1891.	Estimated to middle of 1895.	Registered Births.
Bourton	782	800	14
Silton	212	214	4
Kilmington ...	369	375	5
East Knoyle... ..	956	999	26
West Knoyle ...	158	160	4
Kingston Deverill ...	234	247	8
Monkton Deverill ...	104	111	4
Maiden Bradley	606	627	14
Mere	2749	2785	61
Sedgehill	176	195	7
Stourton	410	422	13
	<hr/> 6756	<hr/> 6935	<hr/> 160

New cases of sickness in each locality coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health :—

	Scarla- tina.	Diph- theria.	Erysip- elas.
Bourton	1	1	..
Silton .. ..	..	..	..
Kilmington.. ..	..	..	..
East Knoyle .. ..	..	..	1
West Knoyle .. ..	..	..	..
Kingston Deverill	..	..	..
Monkton Deverill..	..	..	..
Maiden Bradley ..	7	1	1
Mere.. ..	1	2	2
Sedgehill .. ..	..	..	..
Stourton	1	..	..
	<hr/> 10	<hr/> 4	<hr/> 4

Notification of infectious diseases has been compulsory in the district since Jan. 1, 1890.

The table of deaths shows:—

			At all ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards
Bourton	...	...	13	2	...	...	1	4	6
Silton	...	...	6	...	1	...	1	1	3
Kilminster	...	...	7	1	1	...	...	1	4
East Knoyle	...	...	10	2	1	...	...	2	5
West Knoyle	...	...	4	1	1	...	...	1	1
Kingston Deverill	...	...	2	1	...	...	...	1	...
Monkton Deverill	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	1	...
Maiden Bradley	...	...	9	1	1	...	...	2	5
Mere	...	...	57	8	3	1	2	12	31
Sedgehill	...	...	4	...	...	...	...	2	2
Stourton	...	...	10	2	1	...	...	3	4
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			123	18	9	1	4	30	61

The causes of mortality are:—

			Whooping Cough	Phthisis	Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy	Heart Disease	Influenza	Injuries	All other Diseases	Total
Bourton	...	...	...	1	3	1	...	1	7	13
Silton	...	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	4	6
Kilminster	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	5	7
East Knoyle	...	...	...	...	1	3	1	...	5	10
West Knoyle	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	3	4
Kingston Deverill	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1
Monkton Deverill	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	2
Maiden Bradley	...	...	...	...	2	3	...	...	4	9
Mere	...	...	1	4	13	14	1	1	23	57
Sedgehill	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	3	4
Stourton	...	...	1	...	2	...	...	...	7	10
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			2	7	21	25	2	2	64	123